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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Thursday, June 16, 1932

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Managing the Refrigerator." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

Publications available: "Household Refrigeration Charts." May be bought for 20 cents from the Supt. of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.

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Managing a refrigerator is a simpler matter than managing an automobile. But some of the principles involved are alike. For one thing, if you manage either your refrigerator or your car correctly, you get better and more lasting service. For another thing, it pays to treat both these machines with scientific care.

Has science anything to do with a refrigerator? Indeed, it has, Arabella. And I'll tell you how I know. I once went to the Bureau of Home Economics and there on the wall were hanging six big charts covered with pictures and helpful remarks about refrigerators. Experts of the Bureau have made a study of refrigeration, you see. They've investigated such subjects as the right temperature for keeping different kinds of foods, how to care for raw and cooked meat so that it will keep at its best, the rate of increase of the bacteria in milk held at different temperatures and many other things every housewife wants to know.

The results of these investigations appear on the charts with their helpful diagrams and pictures. I believe the charts were planned for use in schools, for home economics teachers especially, but there's no reason why you shouldn't have a set if you're interested in doing right by your ice-box. A set of these charts costs 20 cents at the Government Printing Office.

The charts show you--but let's go over and look at them together, one by one. There's a lot to learn just by looking at them.

Chart Number 1, hanging over here on the right, is labeled: Using the Temperature in a Good Refrigerator. This picture shows an ordinary household refrigerator, filled with the food most of us keep inside our own.

In the coldest part of this refrigerator, right below the ice chamber or refrigerating unit are milk, butter, broth, desserts, and milk dishes. The temperature in this compartment isn't over 45 degrees Fahrenheit. In the next coldest compartment--not over 47 degrees-- are the uncooked meats, poultry, and a covered jar for salad materials. In the next coldest--not over 48 degrees--are such foods as cooked meats and berries, spread out on a plate.

Next comes the "not over fifty degrees" compartment where such foods as cooked vegetables, eggs, fats and left-overs belong. Finally, fruits and vegetables are safe and sound in the 52-degree section.

So much for Chart Number One. Don't you gather from that chart that the old rule of "a place for everything and everything in its place" is just as useful in the refrigerator as outside?

Next, is Chart Number Two, which bears this good advice: "Be sure that milk and meat are placed in the coldest section." Three styles of refrigerators are shown on this chart, well worth looking over before you buy a new refrigerator.

So we'll pass to Chart Number Three, which is all about "Care of Meat in the Home." Do you know that meat should be unwrapped as soon as it is delivered? Do you know that uncooked meat should be placed in an uncovered dish? Cover it loosely, if at all. If the meat is cooked, again cover it only loosely--perhaps with oiled paper to prevent its drying out. The air in a good refrigerator, you know, is cold but dry, so food may dry out on the surface. Keep the uncooked meats in the 47 degree section of the ice-box and the cooked meats in the 48-degree section.

Chart number four has plenty of interesting things to show about temperature and the development of bacteria in milk. Dear me. I wish you were really here and looking at these charts with me. They have to be seen to be appreciated. Take this Chart Number 4. If you could just see these diagrams you'd get a better understanding of how rapidly the bacteria increase in milk when it's kept in a warm place. As I've often mentioned before, milk keeps at its best only if it is put in the refrigerator as soon as possible after it is delivered and kept in the coldest part of the refrigerator, where the temperature does not register above 45 degrees Fahrenheit.

Chart Number five gives some more good advice to owners of ice-cooled refrigerators. In big black letters, says Chart Number Five: "Do not let the ice get below the danger line. A well-filled ice chamber means lower temperatures." For instance, here's a refrigerator filled with 80 pounds of ice. The coldest section has a temperature of 43 degrees. But notice that when the ice melts to 50 pounds, the temperature rises to 44 degrees. Finally, when the ice melts to 20 pounds, the temperature goes up to 47 degrees. So "do not let the ice get below the danger line. A well-filled ice chamber means lower temperatures."

The last chart, Chart Six, answers a question people often ask me. This is the question: "Does it save ice in the refrigerator to wrap it in paper or cloth?"

"Wrapping may save ice," explains Chart Six, "but it does not save food. Unwrapped ice melts slightly faster; therefore it gives a lower temperature and furnishes cold surfaces for the condensation of odors." If you want to know how much you save by wrapping ice, I believe it's something like a penny a day. But most of us are interested in saving food, not ice.

I wish I could send you these charts free, but they must be bought from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, in Washington, D.C.

The six charts, 16 by 20 inches in size, are printed in black and white on heavy paper. They cost 20 cents for the six.

I know it's superfluous to add, since I'm talking to up-and-coming housekeepers like yourselves, that the refrigerator is one of the chief safeguards of the health of the family and deserves to be kept in A-1 condition. If you want good service from it, keep it clean and never let it become cluttered up with odds and ends that might better be thrown out.

Here are a few suggestions from the specialists about keeping the refrigerator in good condition. In the first place, wash off the milk bottles and dry them before you set them in the refrigerator. As for vegetables, either wash them or put them in containers of some sort before they go in. The paper bags and wrapping for groceries come off before the groceries go into the ice box. Paper, you see, gives the ice an added chore of useless work to do in cooling it. And it may interfere with the movement of the cold air currents.

Accidents happen in the best regulated ice boxes. When something gets spilled, wipe it up at once and then wash that part of the refrigerator with warm water and borax or a little soda. Scalding and sunning, since they affect both the temperature and the moisture content of the ice-box, aren't recommended by the experts. They are quite unnecessary with the sanitary seamless refrigerator of today. Of course, you take out your racks occasionally and wash them. And, of course, you wash out the entire interior of the chest every so often with a solution of borax or soda in warm water.

Here's a refrigerator question that came in recently:

"Please tell me, Aunt Sammy, which foods should be covered in the ice-box."

The refrigerator experts say that it's well to cover nearly all foods in the refrigerator. Take salad greens, for example. If you're going to keep them for more than a day or so, you'll find they stay fresh and crisp in a tightly covered bowl or refrigerator dish. However, if they're to be used the same day, a damp lettuce bag will keep them nicely.

There are two reasons why it's a good plan to cover foods in the refrigerator. First, it keeps them from drying out on the surface. Second, it keeps the odors of different foods from spreading over the entire chest. Foods like milk and butter, you know, soon take the taste of strongly-flavored foods nearby.

Cabbage, cauliflower, cantaloupes, oranges, apples and other foods having decided odors should be kept in the warmest part of the refrigerator because this is the section where the circulation of air will carry the odors up and away from the other foods.

A friend of mine tells me that she keeps a waxed paper on the cut surface of a melon or cantaloupe to prevent the odor from spreading.

Tomorrow, we'll discuss a gypsy meal for Saturday night. If your thoughts are turning to picnics these days, you may be interested in these picnic ideas.